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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Centennial Day:

AN ORATION,

DELIVERED AT SCHAGHTICOKE, N. Y.

JULY THE FOURTH,

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SIX,

THE ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

—BY—

JOSEPH FOSTER KNICKERBACKER.

VIVAT RESPUBLICA.

TROY, N. Y.:
EDWARD GREEN, PRINTER, 214 RIVER STREET.
1876.

Presented by the Author.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

SCHAGHTICOKE, July 13th, 1876.

J. F. Knickerbacker, Esq.:

DEAR SIR—At a meeting of the citizens of this historic old town, the undersigned were chosen a Committee to solicit a copy of your eloquent and instructive Oration, delivered at Baker's Hall, July 4th, 1876, that the same may be published, and find a lodging place in the libraries and on the center tables of the present generation, and thereby be handed down to their posterity as a record which will be referred to with great interest by them.

Very Respectfully Yours,

JOSEPH McELROY, JR.,
CLARK C. HILL,
LORENZO BAKER,
DR. ROBT. HORNBROOK,
JAMES NUTT,
DR. E. N. BEALE,
MICHAEL McGRATH,
S. S. CONGDON,
E. F. FROST,
ALPHONZO MERRILL,
ELIHU BUTTS.

SCHAGHTICOKE, July 15, 1876.

GENTLEMEN:

In complying with your kind request, soliciting a copy of my Centennial address, delivered at Schaghticoke, on the fourth day of July, inst., I do so willingly, and yet with reluctance. Willingly, as the oration contains some allusions to our beloved old town, which, under the circumstances, I feel you have a right to expect from me, and at the same time, I do so with reluctance, from the fact of a dreaded comparison with the many far abler productions our late commemoration has called forth, and that have already been published. And also, for the well known reason that the effect produced by a discourse, when heard as it falls from the orator, is very different from what the same appears when perused on the printed page.

I have the honor to be, gentlemen, very respectfully yours,

J. F. KNICKERBACKER.

To Messrs. McElroy, Hill, Baker, Hornbrook, Nutt, Beale, McGrath, Congdon, Frost, Merrill, and Butts, Committee.

ORATION.

FELLOW-CITIZENS:

At last the dayspring from on high has ushered in this long anticipated, fondly welcomed morning. The cannon's roar booming across the continent from its remotest borders, has in one concerted resonance borne upward to the sky our token-sign of greeting. The united tones of a hundred thousand belfries, in rich acclaim, chimed forth their paeans commemorative of the glorious advent. From city, village, and far-distant wilderness; yea, from myriad homesides within these broad domains, is heard the jubilant of praise; while the glad hearts of forty million freemen beat in unison to the laudatory: All hail to the dawn of the centennial anniversary of AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE!

Nor yet here, does the ovation cease! All nations send hitherward their cordial congratulations. And oh! what an august pageant, my countrymen, is thus exhibited upon earth! Where before in all the annals of the past, has there been such a signal given of universal brotherhood among the peoples? And what a sublime picture do we present to the eyes of the world as a memorial record for the ages of the future.

Let us for a moment pass in imagination to the not far off city of Philadelphia, and witness the scenes in and about the ancient Statehouse, where the event we commemorate originated; and where our broad-famed charter of liberty was formed, just one hundred years ago to-day. And we may behold there assembled, to grace the occasion: the President of the Republic surrounded by his principal Councillors of state; the chief Judges; the Senators and Representatives in Congress; the commanding officers of the Army and Navy; the foreign Ministers; the Governors of our different commonwealths; the many distinguished

guests from abroad, and from among our own people; all convened in festival array for the august ceremonial; while superadded to this scene of our national rejoicing, arises the grand spectacle of an INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION.

And as if in magic space of time, as if by magic means, the long unheeded sands of earth and once despised weeds, have been by the skillful art of man transformed into plates of clearest crystal, and the rough, misshapen lumps of ore, delved from the mountain-side, by his plastic hand been wrought into the graceful column and symmetrical arch, all of which, being fitly framed together, are moulded into stately, harmonic edifices; crystal palaces! from the summit of which are floating to the breezes in peacefulness and unity, the banners of all nations—christianized, civilized and barbarous. While within these spacious structures are collected the wonders of the age, the accumulated triumphs of this nineteenth century of christendom. The rarities of nature and the achievements of art; the gorgeous, the simple, the tasteful, the delicate; the cunning devices, the elaborate designs, the consummated results; the useful, the beautiful, the luxurious, the grand; the couches of ease and the weapons of death; the rich tapestries and embroideries, the costly fabrics in blue, and purple, and crimson; the precious stones; the devices in silver and the devices in gold: the carved works, the paintings, the statuary; the implements of wood, of iron, of steel, of brass; the machinery to till the earth, to reap the grains, to weave the fabrics, to propel the enginery; the discoveries in science; the achievements in knowledge; the wonders of invention, and the creations of genius; of this era of humanity, in beautiful arrangement, have been collected there. And may we not rejoice in all the fullness of our joy, as thoughts and emotions within us rise that fill our hearts with brotherly love, and lift our souls to heaven in thankfulness and praise, when we behold around us that mighty concourse, of thousands and tens of thousands, of all peoples, and nations, and climes; of every language, and caste, and hue; in unity, good-will and concord, come hither to contend for the prize of manual skill, the artizan's wreath, the chaplet

to the honor of diligence, and for the crown of peaceful glory.

And what, fellow-citizens, through the movement of events, may be the future destiny of our country; whether or not another centennial morn shall greet us as a Republic we cannot tell. But whatever shall constitute the condition of things one hundred years from now, be assured that the surroundings of this commemoration will always continue conspicuous upon the page of history, as a memorial for the eyes of mankind. Like the scene of the Deluge; like the passage of the Red Sea; like the fall of Babylon; like the battle of Marathon; like the building of Solomon's temple; like the incoming of Christianity; like the discovery of America; like all the more important epochs of the world; the deeds of this day, and the glorious auspices which attended it, will be wafted adown the flood of time until the advent of the Archangel's trump!

One hundred years ago, my friends, and how different was the scene presented within the (at that time) small town of Philadelphia, compared with the triumphal pageantry witnessed there to-day. For then, a spirit of solemnity and of sacred responsibility, pervaded every heart, and enveloped every surrounding. The momentous question of a Declaration of Independence, and of separation from the sovereignty of Great Britain, was the consideration of the hour. The sustainment of a principle, and of an inalienable right, the issue to be decided. A levy of a few farthings tax upon a pound of tea, and the ordaining of an act for a simple stamp to be placed on paper—unjustifiably enforced, and the spirit which accompanied that enforcement, was the immediate occasion which led these colonies to revolt; and which, ultimately, inspired them in their desire for a distinct nationality.

THE REASONS FOR REVOLUTION.

It will not be expected of us, at this time, to enter at large into the causes which led to our Revolution, nor attempt, at length, to describe its scenes and progress. Yet a

few of the governing motives, and the then attending circumstances, we would briefly consider.

In rolling back the scroll of time to that eventful epoch; in retracing the effects of our present national and social privileges to their hallowed beginning in the past, one cannot but be impressed with exultant pride and joy, and with feelings of highest admiration and respect for the exalted character, the heroic virtues, the high ennobled wisdom, manifested by the leading actors in those scenes. The grosser passions of man's nature, those wild, reckless, selfish impulses, which are oftentimes the mainsprings to revolutions, innovations, changes and reforms, were either by them unfelt, or were subjected to the principles of a calmer reason, a broader justice, and a more enlightened conscience. They wisely thought, and cautiously considered, ere they formed their plans and purposes; yet when once they had conceived them, and then had received them, they were carried out with fearless and determined energy.

But that which is chiefly to be applauded is the ennobled spirit of harmony that presided over their councils, and sustained and guided their every act. They confided in unity of thought and action as the fortress of their strength, and not alone to private, individual opinion, however plausible or alluring, for they knew, and feared, its weakness. The good of country—not of self, was their propelling motive; the love of justice and humanity—not personal ambition—their abiding principle. They considered that true national independence—that genuine, personal independence, is ever social. That each mind may reflect the rays, though not be within itself, or rather from itself, the full sun of public opinion. "Our cause is just, our union is perfect." Such was the language which they used.

It was not mere hatred to Great Britain; it was not the fierce passion of revenge; it was not personal ambition, nor, at first indeed, was it the desire for independence, that led our fathers to forswear their loyalty. But strong, devoted principle, a sterling sense of duty, a hatred of oppression, a desire, a fruitless desire, to regain their lost

and usurped rights and privileges, secured to them by seal and charter, and by the law of nature and of nations, as colonial subjects of the crown. For mark the spirit of their petition to the king: "*Place us*," say they, "*Place us in situation we were in at the close of the last war, and our former harmony will be restored. We ask but for peace, liberty and safety. We wish not a diminution of the prerogative, nor do we solicit the grant of any new right in our favor. Your royal authority over us, and our connection with Great Britain, we shall always carefully and zealously endeavor to support and maintain.*"

Strong and many were the cords that bound them to the mother country. For to her, mainly, were they indebted for their laws, customs, arts, literature and learning. And then, too, there were the sacred ties of consanguinity, of personal friendships, and of a common language and a common religion. And even their national pride and ambition would naturally turn to her for favor and reward.

For how potent, how mighty, then was England! Reposing and glorying amid the accumulated wealth, and pride, and conquests, genius arts and learning, of a thousand years of time! A sovereign among the sovereignties, to whom all peoples, and nations, and tongues, were taught to render homage. A great light of the world, whose rays extended to earth's remotest bounds. A nation vieing with those of the Orient in her magnificence, and whose martial power and resources were unsurpassed in the proudest days of ancient Rome, or by the palmiest epochs of renowned Greece.

It was to that nation, grown arrogant by power, and become hardened through prosperity, that these people were then the subjects, and from whom they were soon to sever their allegiance, and against whom they were to battle for their rights. It was not until oppression assumed the robes of justice, and tyranny trampled upon the vestments of liberty and conscience, that our fathers first petitioned for their rights, then reasoned, then remonstrated, at last threatened and defied. They endured, so long as endurance was a virtue, but when that ceased to be, then conscience named resistance duty.

But so long did they forbear; thus long was with them endurance, virtue. Petition had followed upon petition, and remonstrance succeeded to remonstrance, and threatening and defiance climaxed all. Yet, they fought not then! They were not the aggressors in the scenes that followed. No blood was spilt; no sword unsheathed; they fought not then! Nay, even when the fields of Lexington, and Concord, and Bunker's Hill, were strewn with the forms of fallen colonists, and the flames had ascended from burning Charlestown; though, at that time brave and earnest resistance had been made, and scenes of blood had followed, yet even then, most would have been loyal still! They sought not, they wished not, revolution; but only the redress of grievances, and the safety and return of former rights and privileges, secured to them by seal and charter, and by the laws of nature and of nations, as loyal subjects of the crown. May be, that even then concession, acknowledgement and restitution would have deferred till later time the scenes and results which followed. Once more did they petition, and again did they supplicate in vain.

And now was heard the call, "to arms!" and the tocsin of battle sounded; while from mountain, hill, and dale were echoed forth the indignant shouts: "Resistance to Oppression!" "American Liberty!" "National Independence!"

And then on the fourth day of July, in the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-six, within the State House at Philadelphia, in council were convened, the sages and the oracles of the land. While a spectacle most impressive and august was presented by that assemblage. And although that consumate moral chieftain of all time, George Washington, was not there in person, (for he already held the position of commander-in-chief of the army,) yet was he present in spirit, and with all the fervor of his patriotic heart. Still amid that concourse could be witnessed the bold hero of the revolution, John Hancock, and those devoted patriots John and Samuel Adams, and Roger Sherman, and Philip Livingston, and Robert Morris, and Richard Stockton, and Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson,

and Edward Rutledge, and Arthur Middleton; and in short, all that galaxy of worthies whose names have since become illustrious in connection with those surroundings. But now the weight of mighty responsibilities was hanging over that council, while its decrees were awaited by thousands with breathless expectation.

Ere long the result of their labors was accomplished. They had set forth in written form, their colonial wrongs and grievances. They had proclaimed in strong and solemn words, their national rights and duties; in a word, that immortal instrument was created, so wonderful in its conception, so masterly in its execution; which declares that these then colonies "*are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and of right ought to be, totally dissolved.*"

That the spirit of this declaration was carried out, and its literal intentions fully consummated, let the recorded scenes at Bennington, and Saratoga; at Camden, Monmouth and Yorktown, bear witness. And let yonder stately column, on Bunker's Hill, in chaste and simple grandeur towering heavenward, proclaim to us with silent but matchless eloquence. And the trophies and monuments, everywhere abounding. And more clearly, fuller, stronger still, the scenes which greet us now in all the manifold triumphs of this centennial morning.

A REVIEW OF OUR PROGRESS.

During the century past the world has been prolific in the products of inventive ingenuity and handicraft in all the spheres of material advancement, and our national movements have displayed an onward stride and progress hitherto unequalled in the annals of time. When our Declaration of Independence was formed, we were a feeble, and, in great measure, a dependent people, with little skill in the arts and manufactures; with little comparative wealth; and with a still undeveloped national influence. Our then largest seaport towns were not to be named in numerical strength

and resources, with many of the more moderately sized inland communities of to-day. Our agricultural districts were sparsely peopled, while the population of the whole thirteen provinces, was only about three million souls. One hundred years ago, my friends, and what a different state of things was exhibited, not alone on this continent, but throughout the whole cizilized world. One hundred years ago and many of the more important sciences were still struggling in their infancy, while others were unborn. Successful experiments had been made in some of the minor branches of Chemistry; but Geology was just dawning upon the earth. And although much had been disclosed of the altitude of the stars, and of the movements in the firmament, yet glorious strides have since been made in the noble science of Astronomy. The steam engine had been invented, but its manifold adaptations to the pursuits of man were not yet even dreamed of. Franklin had brought the thunderbolt from the skies, and held it in his grasp; but it was left till later time to make it a messenger of thought at the bidding of a child, and to send its fiery essence through a girdle round the globe. Photography and the alleviating power of the ether vapors were unknown. Enginery, labor-saving machinery, and the science of husbandry, little understood. And naught was yet revealed of the causes of the changes in the atmospheric currents. The implements of the farm were those of the crudest, simplest form and contrivance. The coarse wooden soil-breaker of the time; the scythe and the sickle; the simple hand rake; the primitive flail; the winnowing sieve, have since been superseded by the more efficient iron plow, the mower and the reaper, the revolving horse rake, the threshing machine and the fanning mill.

One hundred years ago and there were no steam propelled palaces beheld entering our river harbors, or moving in majestic triumph upon the surface of the seas. There were no fiery engine trains racing as if with the fleetness of the wind. There were no electric telegraphs forming a network round the continents in the servitude of man.

One hundred years ago and there was no gas for lighting houses; there were no furnaces for heating houses; there

were no street cars, no omnibusses. There was no anthracite coal, no kerosene oil. There was no India rubber goods. There were no ice houses, no refrigerators, no police officers, no safes, no life insurance companies. There were no Sunday schools, no temperance societies, no woman's right associations. There was no Mt. Cenis tunnel, no Thames tunnel, no Hoosac tunnel. There were no illustrated fashion plates, by which the latest modes from Paris, and other emporiums of toiletry, could be brought to delight the maiden of the wilderness. There were no patent baby jumpers yet invented wherein "Young America," even in infancy, is inspired "to paddle its own canoe." There were no "Old Probabilities" foretelling with greatest accuracy a fair or rainy bridal morn; or whether the wooer in his triumph shall have a clear or cloudy day for success. There were no washing machines in those days. There were no sewing machines. There were no International Expositions, the glory of the age.

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

The manners, forms, customs, tastes, sentiments, and the home comforts and surroundings of one hundred years ago have all undergone a change. In some instances doubtless for their improvement, though perhaps in other things not so worthy of our praise. The ancient, stately dignity of manner, the oftentime stern precision in the observance of ceremonial, and even grace itself, has been superceded by that indescribable dash and freedom of movement, that dauntless self-possession and *aplomb*, crowned by the *air superb* which characterizes the present period. The stern authority of parental government, often bearing with it the spirit of fear and awe, in a household, to the detriment of affection, has been followed by such negligence in such matters as leads to an absence of true reverence for authority. The repulsive long-faced demeanor of the olden time religionist has advanced to the other extreme of too much flippancy observed among the devout. "Early to bed, and early to rise," with its glorious consequences, was the injunction of our fathers. The convenience of this latter

age has come to quite an opposite conclusion. Conventional language has since been greatly modified and improved; yet, withal, what a tissue of slang and incorrectness is still a modern conversation.

This subject might be extended indefinitely, but I must pass to other themes.

TRIALS OF THE NATIONS.

In reviewing the page of history since the epoch of 1776; what a drama has been enacted upon the stage of the political world? What scenes! what acts! what characters! have appeared? What havoc! what slaughtering! what avenging wrathfulness! has at times been exhibited! The older powers of Europe and elsewhere have each in their turn had their trials, disasters and triumphs; some, of less earlier prestige, arising to greater fame of position, while others—once the more potent—have been shorn of their imperial sway. Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Prussia, Turkey, Greece, England, Russia, Holland, and the states of Southern America, have all in their governmental surroundings, passed through the fiery furnace of affliction. The American Revolution was succeeded by the Reign of Terror in France—that direst, most ignoble tragedy in the annals of time, but which was only to be followed by others of similar debasement, that seem to have come, as if they were special judgments on that otherwise highly favored people. Spain and Italy have had their internal convulsions, which were more or less the throes of greater liberty of aspiration. While Russia, and Prussia, have ascended in the scale to grander sovereignty and renown. And we, too, in America, have had our national trials, and political greviances. Without attempting to enumerate them, I need only advert to that last, sad epoch in our annals, the late civil war, which resulted to the sustainment of our claim, as a unity of power, and to the abolition of slavery; but which, withal, was followed by surroundings that are still felt, both in their good and evil effects on our institutions and character.

THE UNITED STATES, TO-DAY.

And now, fellow-citizens, what is the position of this country—known as the United States of America—among the nations of the world, on this Centennial morning?

Calm, serene, undaunted! she stands forth to-day, an equal among the proudest; bowing to none, yet respected by all. She bears a prestige for rapid development unsurpassed in history. Her original thirteen colonies have augmented into eight and thirty flourishing commonwealths. Her three million citizens—of the provincial period—have become multiplied into more than forty millions. Her peoples are all free! Her government is still a democracy! Her principal towns are only excelled in numerical strength by the great capitals of the older world, while cities of smaller dimension, yet possessing all the refinements and luxuries of the most advanced civilization, are scattered across her domains. Her agricultural interests are so amplified and extended, that she is fast becoming as it were the storehouse for the feeding of the nations. Her mineral wealth, her gold, her silver, her iron, her copper, her coal-beds, are inexhaustible. Her manufacturing facilities are immense, and daily attaining to the most satisfactory results. In many branches of handicraft and inventive ingenuity, she stands unapproached. Her great merchants are renowned throughout the earth. She has originated some of the most important of the modern discoveries. In the arts of embellishment, in architectural combination, in the adaptation of beauty with convenience, utility with harmony of design, her yearly augmenting, palatial structures, her temples, capitols, college halls, factories, hospitals and many alluring homesides, display an unparalleled advancement. Her glorious inland lakes and rivers, her fertile soil, her boundless prairies, and lofty mountain ranges are the admiration of the world. Her railway and telegraphic privileges, though already manifold, are evermore increasing. Her foreign commerce crosses every sea, blesses every land. Her domestic commerce is unequalled on the globe.

Thus my fellow citizens, stands in material grandeur, these UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, often styled the "In-

fant Republic," among the nations of the world, on this Centennial morning.

OUR REPUBLIC A SUCCESS.

And here we pause, for the question may arise: "Is all this apparent prosperity the product of a legitimate, straight forward healthfulness of action? And are there not influences at work that often lead us to tremble, even in the midst of our rejoicing?" In one word, "has this great experiment of ours of one hundred years as a Democracy been a success or a failure?" True, there have been many things of late to check us in our career, and make us fearful of the consequences. But much of this is the result of peculiar local and temporary causes, which the future will disperse. There has been undeniably great fraud committed in places of high trust; there is a sad want of integrity exhibited in community, and a deplorable spirit of extravagance pervades the people, and consequently our financial prosperity for a season is depressed. Yet, it should be remembered in this connection, that the evil of which we complain is more or less the evil of the age, and that from all nations is borne to us the cry of dishonesty and corruption. And therefore —all things considered—I would unhesitatingly reply: our Republican form of government has been, unquestionably, a success. And not alone successful in itself, but there is strongest reason to believe, that the very existence of our democratic institutions have exercised a potent influence upon other lands. The co-existence of France as a Republic is undoubtedly owing to our American precedent. And our example and prosperity have led the peoples of many countries to a more just understanding of their natural and political rights, and caused a liberal modification of the laws, even in the despotic governments themselves. And whether as a Republic or not, certainly as a power among the nations, it will not be denied that our public expression of sympathy and approval was not, to say the least, without its moral weight, during the revolt of the South American States, against the oppressive policy of Spain in 1818; and also in behalf of Greece, in her brave struggle for independ-

ence in the year 1824. And further, we have been the means, through our diplomatic agencies, of bringing to the knowledge of mankind, the long hidden treasures contained within the colossal empires of China and Japan, and of opening those important ports to the commerce of the world.

DEFICIENCY OF GREAT MEN.

We have hitherto been speaking of the material grandeur of our country, but how is it with respect to its moral and intellectual standing? For the true glory of a nation consists, not so much in outward power and magnificence, as in the virtue and intelligence of its citizens.

> "Not high raised battlement or labored mound,
> Thick wall or moated gate;
> Not cities proud, with spires and turrets crowned;
> Not bays and broad armed ports,
> Where, laughing at the storm, rich navies ride;
> Not starred and spangled courts,
> Where low-browed baseness wafts perfume to pride.
> No! men, high minded men,
> These constitute a State."

Now has our rapid stride in the varied spheres of physical advancement been at the expense of the higher manhood of our people? And here, I would again say, that whatever deficiency we may have shown in this particular, is a deficiency, not confined to ourselves, but throughout the world the momentous question of the hour is: What has become of the creative genius of the day? Where are the supremely gifted among mortals, that are to stamp the impress of their minds and character upon the times?

The epoch of the American Revolution, and the age which followed it, was an era of great moral and intellectual potency among the nations in every department of intellegent action.

There were giants in those days, my countrymen! Men who are to be famous throughout the coming ages. Poets, orators, heroes, statesmen, jurists, divines, historians, philosophers, philanthropists, physicians, diplomats, composers, tragedians, many of them of loftiest endowment, abounded, to the pride and admiration of mankind.

But who are those among the illustrious of to-day, to be

compared with the renowned of that period? How few are the acknowledged truly great, now to be found on the face of the globe. And how soon counted, the pre-eminent among the legislators, that could be mentioned. The six or eight prominent living poets, the majority of whom are Americans, are all elderly men, who have held the same position before the public for the past thirty years that they do now. And has any youthful aspirant at the shrine of the divine Muse yet appeared worthy to succeed them? Famous writers in other branches of imaginative literature have adorned the age, but are now departed, leaving us to the feebler instructions of their third and fourth rate successors. Great jurists and law-givers have arisen even in our generation, who were the glory of earth; but where are they now? Conspicuous historians are in our midst; still their productions are of too recent a date to admit of our giving them a position among the Humes, the Hallams, and the Gibbons of an earlier era. Bold thinkers and investigators in the abstruse sciences abound, but who among them—in an enlarged sense of the term—may lay claim to the title of Philosopher, to be ranked with the Bacons, the Newtons, and the Gallileos, of the past? Medicine as a theory, has wondrously advanced; but name if you please the world famed, living Physicians? A few gray haired, eloquent and worthy men, still linger to adorn the pulpit; yet how much of the preaching of to-day is of the simply sensational on the one hand, and of the dry and dull on the other. While a loud voice comes up from the nations, inquiring: Where are the great divines and theologians of the age? Those grand mental gladiators who are to follow in the wake and wield the herculean prowess of the Baxters, and Barrows, and Taylors, the Bossuets, the Halls, and Chalmers, and of the Wesleys and Channings, of former epochs.

The only branches of literature in which this age may be said to be conspicuous, is in Biography, or the records of the lives of the illustrious departed; and in Newspaper journalism, that latest born of the intellectual fulcrums of earth.

MORALITY AND CHRISTIANITY.

Of the Morality and Christianity of the time I would

only say, there are doubtless in proportion to numbers of inhabitants, more who are members of Christian churches than at the date of the Revolution; though moral honesty stood many degrees higher at that time than now. There are in comparison, perhaps, fewer out-and-out Infidels than in those days. And there are by no means so many of what may be styled Hypocrits as then appeared. For Infidelity and Hypocrisy are—in a strict sense of the term—vices of the past.

Now, my friends, what is the difficulty with us to-day? For there is certainly something not altogether right in our midst. But if we will look around us, we will perceive that though there be fewer decried Infidels than of old, yet is there an innumerable class of persons known as doubters, or half believers, in society, persons who have no settled principles nor convictions, either in faith or morals. While on the other hand—and this seems to be the great defect in the religion of the times—there are those who aspire, as it were, to double sentiments—a two-fold belief. They would give, if I may use the expression, a coupled allegiance. There are to be found many sincere and earnest Christians in all the outward acts of devotion, who, at the same time, are striving to serve two masters,—both God and mammon. And amid such an inconsistency of affairs, why wonder that so many fall. There is too much emotional religion, to the neglect of the conscientious. Impulse is not always sustained by principle. And we frequently see that a man can be conspicuous for his fervent prayers of to-day, while on the morrow he will be found pilfering his neighbor's safe. That he may be a very efficient Sunday school teacher and at the same time a sadly dishonorable man. That he can become a zealous advocate for some special dogma of belief, and still be unworthy of the confidence of the community. And of late, unfortunately, it too often occurs, that a large proportion of what may be called the more refined crimes of the time are committed by persons of this class.

The spiritual graces cannot flourish to the decay of the more solid, material virtues. Christianity is the glorious superstructure raised upon the moral decalogue of duty.

And remember, O Christian teacher and preacher, that if the foundation is defective the edifice must totter, and that the forms of the obligations of life are manifold, and that each requires an advocate and interpreter.

The times demand giants in such matters; beings that stand forth supervalient! Like Arctic icebergs facing the everlasting hills.

LOCAL REMINISCENCES.

Citizens of Schaghticoke: In accordance with the proceedings of neighboring communities to-day, we are here assembled to cast a few local pebbles into the grand monumental cairn of this Centennial. And though we may not possess the historic jewels which some from other places bear, as votive offerings to their country's shrine, yet are we not without our own special tokens. Long years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Schaghticoke was a township; and, indeed, was the only settlement on the east of the Hudson, between this place and the city of Albany, while within the county of Albany was comprised the whole northern portion of the now State of New York. That section of the town known as "Old Schaghticoke," was peopled as early as the year 1707; and during the colonial struggles which preceded the war of the Revolution, was often invaded by hostile Indians. A fort or block-house was erected as a safeguard against those incursions, and many families removed with their effects to Albany, thereby assuring greater security. Yet, notwithstanding these precautions numerous lives were sacrificed to the relentless bloodthirstiness of the savage. And it is a matter of history, that of the Van Veghten family, both a father and son were scalped and massacred by the foe. While tradition has borne to us the fact, that when the Indians were seen to approach, the female members of a household ensconced themselves within the huge ovens of that period, which happily, as it would appear, proved glorious hiding places, as it never occurred to the enemy to seek for their victims amid such seemingly warm resorts. Until quite a recent date, several primitive structures were still standing, whose outer boards and casements were perforated with bullet holes, and

which also bore other memento marks of the ravages of that time.

At the commencement of the Revolution a regiment was organized in Schaghticoke, under the auspices of an ancestor of my own, but who afterwards accepting the position of General's staff officer, with the rank of Colonel, the command of the regiment devolved on Colonel Peter Yates, who continued in that capacity—displaying praise-worthy valor and chieftainship—during the subsequent battles in and about Stillwater.

It may not be improper, in this connection, to reproduce a document relating to that period, the original of which is in my possession:

FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE.

Capt. John Snyder, or the next commanding officer at Tomhanick.

SCHACTIKOOK, May 30th, 1776.

DEAR SIR: By order of General Ten Broock, it is now become my duty, as we do not know how soon the country may call upon us for military service, to earnestly recommend it unto you to use your utmost endeavor with the Company under your command, as well officers as privates, that they shall pay due obediance and strictly observe the Rules and Orders for regulating the Militia of the Colony of New York, recommended by the Provincial Congress, the 22d day of August, and the 20th day of December last; and, in particular, the 6th, 7th and 8th sections of said Rules and Orders, and the 5th section of the Appendix to the said Rules and Orders. If you or any of your officers have not the above printed rules, they may be furnished them by applying unto Mathew Visher, Esq., secretary of the Committee for the City and County of Albany. And also, I desire that you furnish me with a list of the Company under your command by the 5th day of June next, and inform me in what manner the men are equiped as to arms, ammunition and accoutrements. I am your most truly humble servant,

JOHN KNICKERBACKER.

I will add that the sword which Col. Knickerbacker used in those days is still retained by his descendants.

At the time of the engagement at Stillwater (more generally known as the battle of Saratoga,) the hillsides surrounding the at present quiet valley of Old Schaghticoke, were often the rendezvous, or resting-place, for the forces on their way to and from the scene of action, while the ancient fort, or block-house, erected during the Indian incursions, was taken possession of by a troop of Hessian

soldiery, in the service of the British, and who were not especially scrupulous in their maraudings upon the domains of the neighboring inhabitants.

Though we may not claim the site of the battle-ground of Saratoga within the present limits of Rensselaer County, yet, as I have before stated, the whole of Northern New York, one hundred years ago, was comprised of the County of Albany. And our fathers, who lived within only five or six miles distant from the scene of the engagement, fought not alone for the good of the nation at large, but as well for the protection of their homes and property.

We have among us to-day, many who are the descendants of revolutionary patriots. The Yateses, the Ackarts, the Quackenbushes, the Vandenburgs, the Vanantwerps, the Brats, the Forts, the De Garmos, the Groesbecks, the Van Veghtens, the Knickerbackers, all of these names—with others—appear on record as persons who within the limits of this township were summoned to duty in the great struggle for independence.

And although not justifying a spirit of arrogance and pride, yet it cannot be denied that there is an aroma, as it were, proceeding from the influence of such surroundings, that at times brings a certain gladness to the heart. To tread amid the scenes which our fathers have trodden generations before us; to look upon the same groves and hillsides, and meadows decked with green, which greeted their vision. To hearken to the echoes from the cliffs, and to every nature's voice, as they listed to them, years long ere we were born! To gaze upon the sun in his rising, and his setting, and upon the firmament, arrayed in all its jeweled night splendor, from the same point of view from which our ancestors beheld them, is something, which though not strictly American in spirit, is yet, withal, pervaded by an unction that inspires to nobility of aim.

CONCLUSION.

And now, fellow-citizens, in conclusion, (and 'tis sad there should be a conclusion to such happy surroundings.) Having, amid the auspices of to-day, surveyed our country's past, from her inception as a Republic to her proud cul-

mination of a century's growth, and to her present position as a nation among the nations; having witnessed her peerless strides and unparalleled advancement; having witnessed also her weaknesses, her shortcomings, and the terrible things which at times have encompassed her; having witnessed some of these in a spirit of pride and exultation, and yet others with the solemn awe born of sorrow and regret. Having, I say, surveyed this grand panorama of the movements of our people, for the last one hundred years, from the summit of the rock of this centennial morning, we now, like the holy seers of old, turn to gaze upon the future. And though the gifts of the prophets' vision departed with the divinely inspired of their generation, yet, thanks to all-beneficent Jehovah! there is still bestowed on mortal that wondrous faculty, the imagination, by which he may picture things sweet to the conception of his heart's wish, though he may not foretell the ordering of events.

Standing in the midst of such surroundings, surroundings supremely felicitous in many respects, and inspiring to the emotions of gratitude and praise, though in other things polluted as if from the foundation of evil, and appalling with horror and dismay.

Standing in the midst of such surrounding, I would say, that though there be much at present to humiliate us as a people, and though there be dark shadows seen flitting across the otherwise beautiful picture of this ceremonial, yet, withal, I am happy to believe that underneath these seeming moral excrescences, there exists the elements of more exalted characteristics, which though temporarily obscured amid the pomp of the hour, are taking deeper root into the soil, and grasping firmer hold of the lasting foundations of things, and that will ultimately assert their supremacy, to the overthrow of iniquity, and to the purifying of the public sentiment.

There are so many righteous Lots, who have not bowed their heads to the idols of corruption. There is still such a spirit of the gods, my countrymen, pervading this glorious land of ours, that we shall not yet be entirely cast off.

And I am happy to believe,—and judging from the past, we have an encheering criterion for the future,—that should

hereafter, temporary trial and misfortune befall us as a nation, there shall be to meet it a heroism worthy of the better elements of our nature, and that there will be shown a bravery, and an elevation of purpose, in behalf of our country's sons, and a self-sacrificing disinterestedness of devotion on the part of her daughters, that will loom out with transcendent brightness upon the record-scroll of the loftiest examples of humanity.

And I am happy to believe that amid the lowering clouds of the present may be witnessed the insignia-bow of a richer promise, while within their richer linings is portrayed the vision of a coming future; purified, regenerated America, crowned with every attribute of the exalted, and looming forth as a beacon-light to the nations, and the glory of the world.

And I behold in imagination, on a not far distant dawning of this anniversary, the symbol-bird of the nation, yea, the spread eagle, (which, ridicule the expression as we may, is and will ever be the truest, worthiest type and emblem of Columbia,) I behold, in imagination, the spread eagle arising from her eyrie here below, exultant as with the pride of recent triumphs, immortal; her outstretched pinions swooping toward either pole, and bearing thereon, as oblation-boons, the enclustered eaglets of our virtues, rarified into celestial graces; while she soars aloft to greet a responsive festival in the skies!

And following in the wake which succeeds that movement;—yea, even a century hence!—I seem to hear the simple strain with which we greeted this glorious morning; caught up and repeated from these surrounding hillsides and distant mountain-tops; and thence borne onward, and onward, over forest, and city, and prairie, and lake, and river, and strand, and wilderness, Northward! Southward! Eastward! Westward! until it touches the ocean-waves of the Atlantic, and of the Pacific; and the remotest borders of our farthest-distant domain; and hence re-echoed back, from every voice of nature, of man, and of living thing, in one harmonious and concerted strain—in sublime diapason—borne upward to the empyrean: EVER HAIL! GRAND OLD CENTENNIAL DAY!

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